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SUBJECT: CUBA ON DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE IN CARIBBEAN

1. (U) Cuba's Ambassador to Guyana and CARICOM, Alejandro Marchante Castellanos, presented his credentials to CARICOM SYG Edwin Carrington March 10. In his remarks, Castellanos said that Cuba planned to establish four new diplomatic missions in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname as it seeks to strengthen relations with individual CARICOM nations. These missions would give Cuba a diplomatic presence in all fifteen CARICOM member states.

2. (SBU) Comment: Cuba's diplomatic overture is in part an attempt to corner, or at least neutralize, CARICOM votes in international fora. Note: CARICOM tries in the first instance to reach consensus and vote as a bloc on multilateral issues. While letting Cuba cozy up to them, CARICOM nations repeatedly pass up opportunities to take Cuba to task - at a minimum for its treatment of political dissidents. The quid pro quo is simple. As Guyana's President Jagdeo once explained to Ambassador, Guyana (and other CARICOM nations) avoid criticizing Cuba because Cuba sends doctors and doles out scholarships. End comment.

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